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ILLINOIS

**HENNEPIN CANAL  
PARKWAY  
TRAVEL GUIDE**

Feeder

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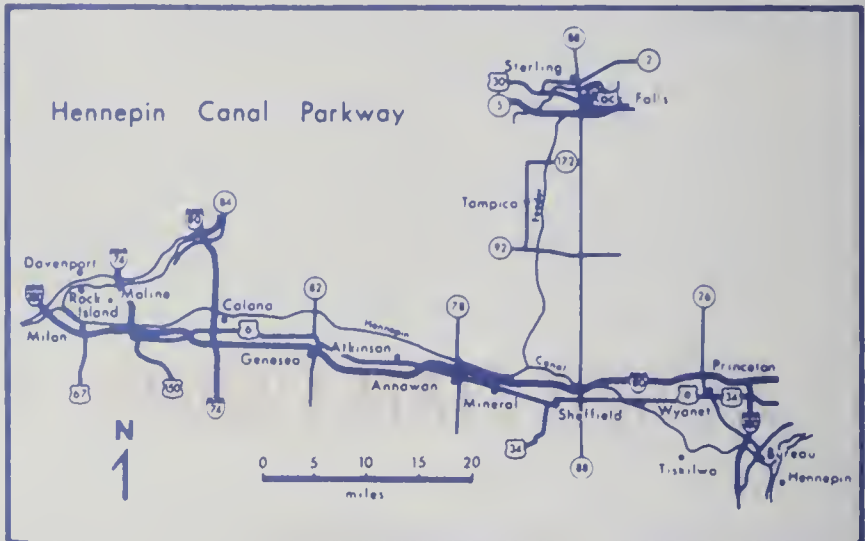


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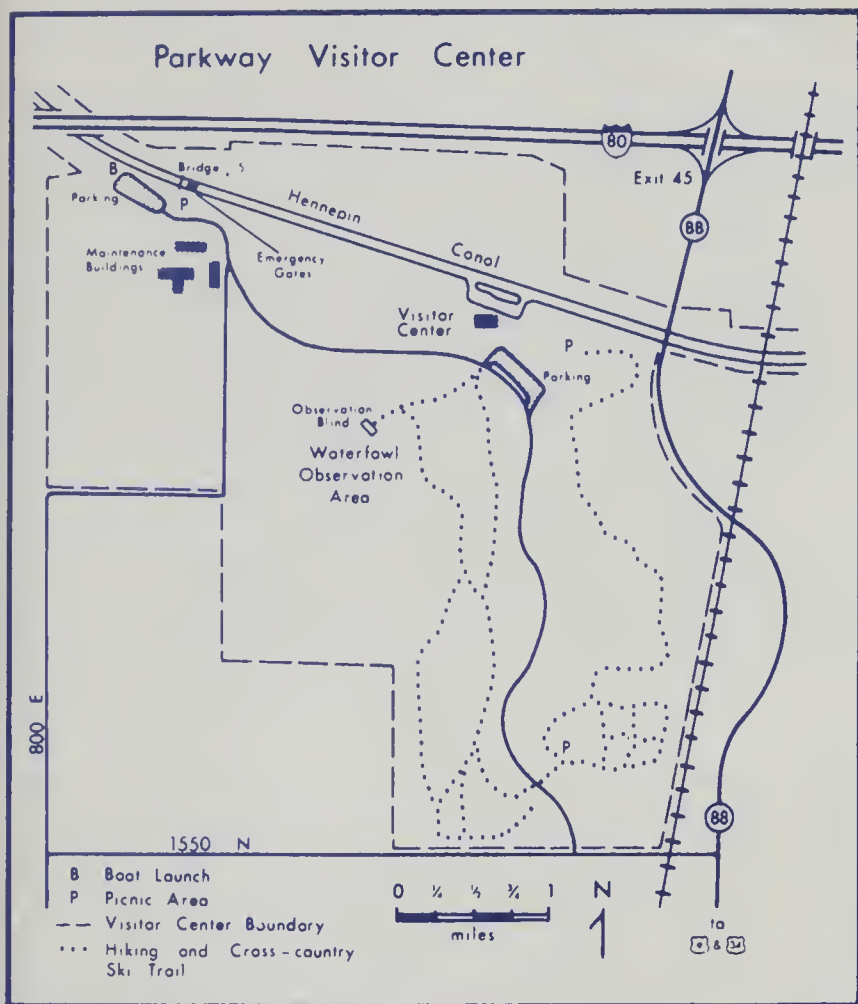
## Feeder

The Hennepin Canal Parkway is a unique, ninety-six mile, 4,300-acre waterway corridor in north-western Illinois. Formerly known as the Illinois-Mississippi Canal, but more commonly called the Hennepin Canal, the main line of the waterway extended from the great bend of the Illinois River to the Mississippi River west of Milan. A feeder from the Rock River at Rock Falls supplied water to the main line.



Land acquisition and construction of the canal by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers began in 1890 and was completed in 1907. The canal served as a commercial waterway from 1907 to July of 1951, when it was closed to navigation. During the next two decades, the corps performed standby maintenance while negotiations were taking place for transfer of the waterway to the state. In 1970, the transfer was completed and the canal was placed under the supervision of the Illinois Department of Conservation.

The parkway is a popular recreational area for sport fishing, pleasure boating, picnicking, primitive camping, horseback riding, snowmobiling, backpacking, and hiking. In 1976, the Hennepin Canal Visitor Center was opened at a 400-acre recreational site northeast of Sheffield. The site includes an information center with displays and restroom facilities, a hiking and cross-country ski trail, a waterfowl observation area, a boat launch ramp, marina, picnic areas, playground equipment, one of the remaining canal truss bridges, and emergency gates that were used to stop the flow of water if a break occurred in one of the canal banks.



*Hennepin Canal Visitor Center*

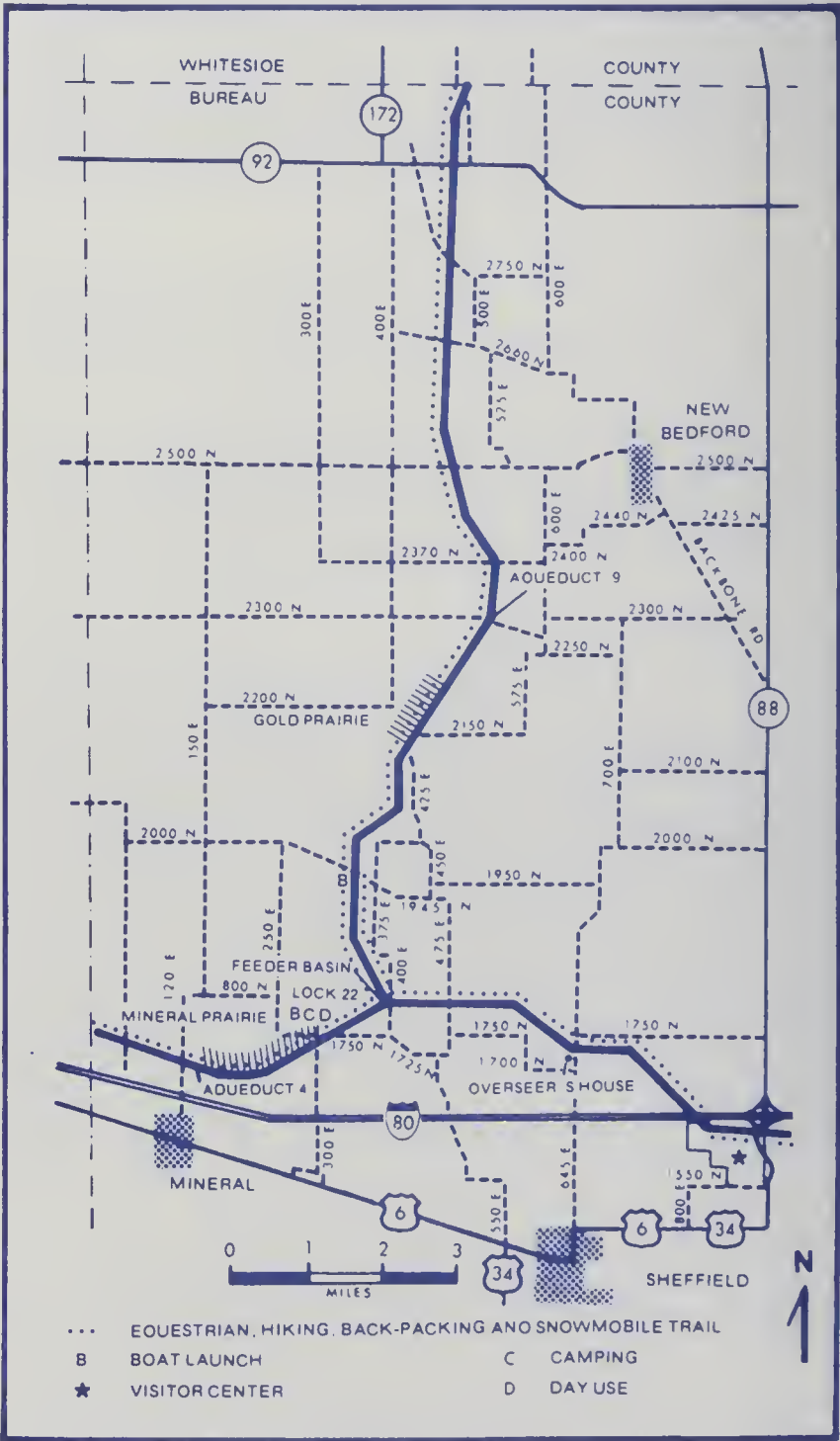
Earlier canals that were built to bypass an unnavigable portion of a river received water from the upstream end, or highest point of elevation. Because the elevation of the Hennepin Canal was higher than the Illinois and Mississippi rivers, water



was drawn from a still higher elevation on the Rock River and “fed” into the main line to flow east and west through a series of locks and pools.

The canal feeder from the Rock River is twenty-nine miles in length and connects with the main line at the feeder basin between Mineral and Sheffield. Excavation of the feeder began in 1889, but was not completed until 1907 due to lawsuits over bridge capacity and construction changes.

To the west of the visitor center and north of Sheffield on County Road 645E is one of three remaining overseer’s houses. The two-story frame structure has been occupied continuously since it was built near the turn of the century.



Southern Section

The feeder basin, also referred to as the summit pool, may be reached by one of several county roads. Lock 22, one mile west of the basin at Coun-

ty roads 1750N and 300E, has a girder lift bridge on its downstream end, a day use area, a primitive camping site, and a boat launch ramp. Unlike most other locks on the canal, Lock 22 has been restored to its original condition.

Mineral Prairie, a 9.5-acre remnant of bluejoint grass, is on the north side of the canal's main line between Lock 22 and Aqueduct 4. The aqueduct is north of Mineral and less than one-half mile east of County Road 120E.

An equestrian, hiking, backpacking, and snowmobile trail extends north from the feeder basin and east and west on the main line. A boat launch ramp is north of the basin.

The feeder has a number of interesting geographic features. Throughout much of its length are found remnant sand ridges that date from the Pleistocene epoch when the ancient Rock and Green rivers served as meltwater channels for the retreating glaciers.

Gold Prairie, a 2.3-acre remnant dominated by Indian grass and big bluestem, is accessible from County roads 2200N and 2150N.



*Aqueduct 9*

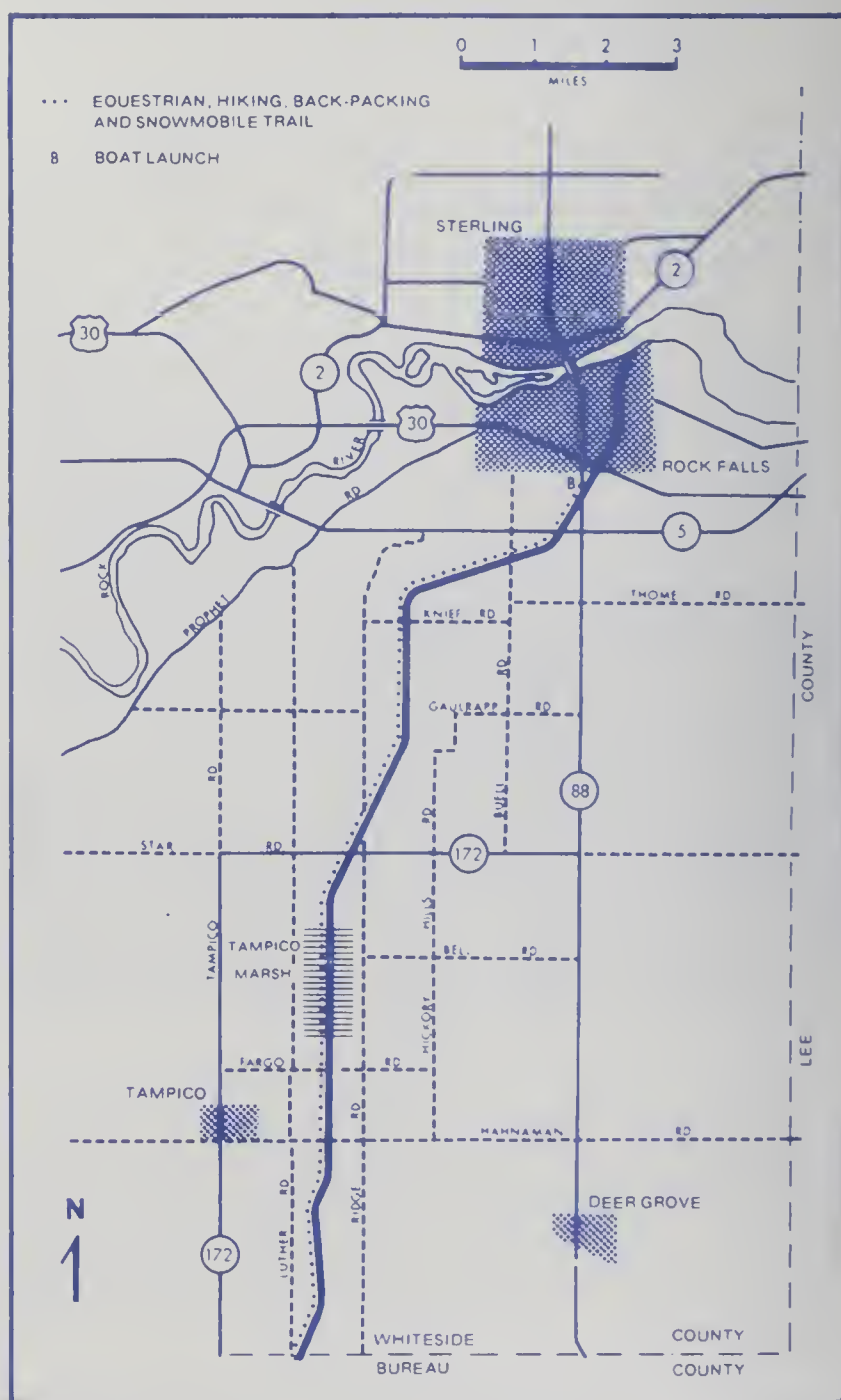
Aqueduct 9, which spans the Green River, is three-tenths of a mile north of County Road 2300N. The longest of the canal's aqueducts, the structure has had recent extensive repairs and is equipped with a Desfontaines-type emergency gate (submerged) at each end.





Aqueduct 9

Tampico Marsh, north and east of Tampico, is a linear, 25.7-acre ecological community of cattails and arrowleaf with some woody species along both banks of the feeder. The marsh may be reached on foot from either Fargo or Star roads.



Northern Section



A boat launch ramp is located at Illinois Route 88 north of Illinois Route 5. An equestrian, hiking, backpacking, and snowmobile trail is along the west bank of the feeder south of Illinois Route 88.

Lake Sinnissippi on the Rock River serves as a reservoir for the feeder. The lake — 2,400 acres in area — was created by constructing Government



*Government Dam*

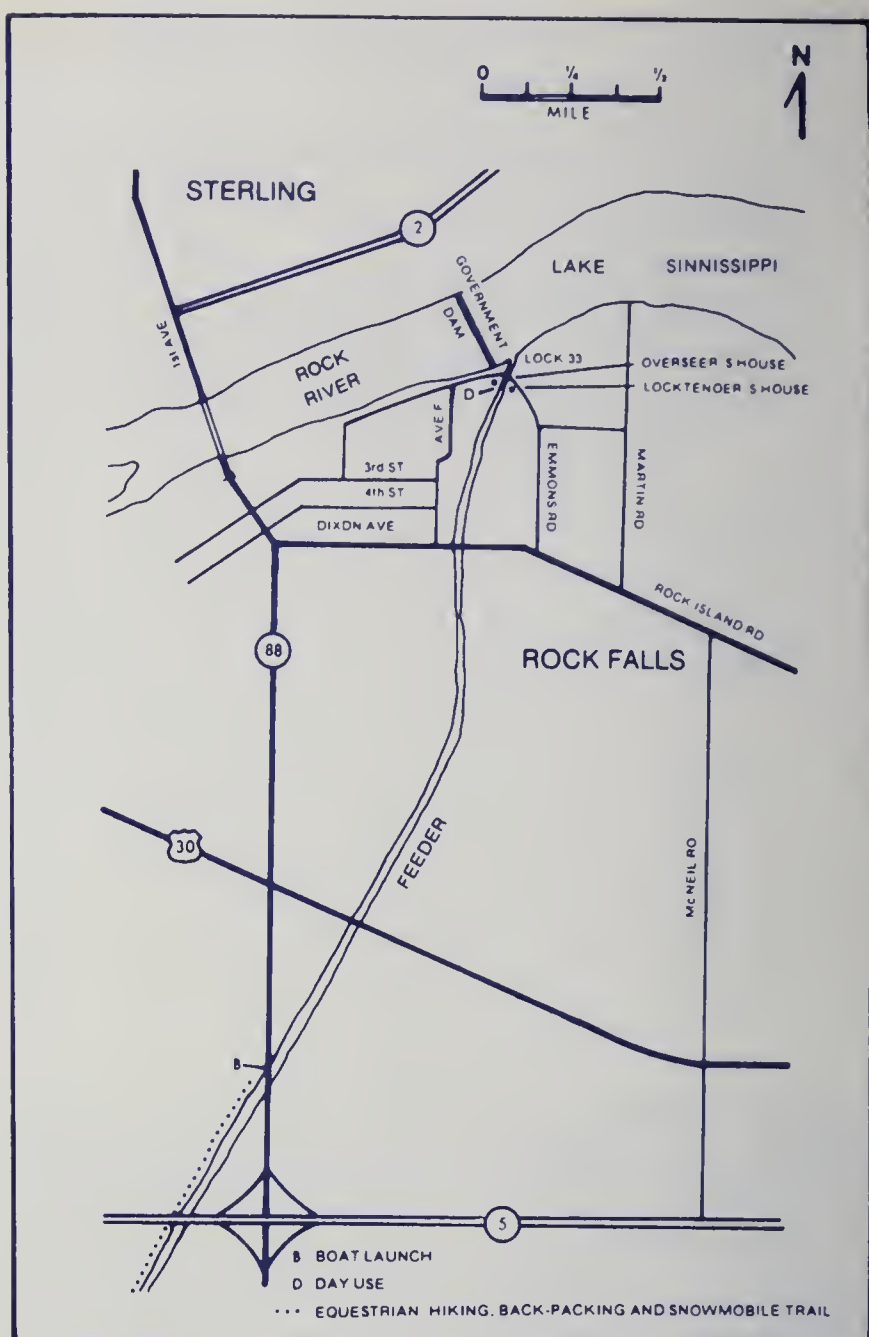
Dam between Rock Falls and Sterling. The dam also provided flood control and had a navigation lock.

Lock 33 (Guard Lock), which has been restored to its original condition, controlled navigation on the feeder. The Lock 33 site includes Government



*Lock 33*

Dam and the modified navigation lock, an overseer's house that was the largest residence on the canal, a locktender's house, and a day use area. The site is readily accessible from Illinois routes 5, 88, and 2, and U.S. Route 30.



Rock Falls Area

Nearby sites such as Morrison-Rockwood State Park, Prophetstown State Park, Lee County Conservation Area, and Johnson Sauk Trail State Park provide additional recreational opportunities. Also, Tampico is the birthplace of President Ronald Reagan, and Dixon, twelve miles east of Rock Falls, is his boyhood home.

This travel guide was prepared by Donald W. Griffin, Professor of Geography and Director, Institute for Regional, Rural, and Community Studies, Western Illinois University, Macomb, Illinois. Research and cartographic assistance were provided by John A. McFarland, Eric Shields, and Paul Adams, Department of Geography, Western Illinois University. Thanks are due to Steve Moser, Site Superintendent of the Hennepin Canal Parkway, for his comments, suggestions, and, above all, support for the travel guide series.